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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of Extension agents and volunteer 4-H Club leaders regarding a newly proposed concept of using county leaders in the conduct and expansion of 4-H Club work in Idaho. An objective was to find out if volunteer 4-H Club leaders felt qualified to conduct: (1) 4-H leader training, (2) planning with Extension, (3) recruiting members and leaders, and (4) organizing new leaders and 4-H Clubs. A questionnaire was mailed to all extension agents (101) and all 4-H leaders (617) in seven randomly selected counties. The questionnaires were different except for one part which asked for the amount of training needed by a county level leader. Extension agents returned 88 questionnaires; all were used. Four-H Leaders returned 325; 32 were incomplete and not used. From the data collected, it appeared that Idaho Extension agents and 4-H leaders participating in the study had positive attitudes toward the county level leadership concept. A majority of the respondents agreed that volunteer 4-H leaders could assist Extension by assuming some of the organizational work currently being done by agents. (EB)

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ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SERVICE LEADER AND PROGRAM LEADER APPROACH TO EXPANDED 4-H CLUB WORK IN IDAHO

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY PULLMAN

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SERVICE LEADER AND PROGRAM LEADER APPROACH TO EXPANDED 4-H CLUB WORK IN IDAHO*

by

Charles M. Thomas

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of Extension agents and volunteer 4-H Club leaders regarding a newly proposed concept of using county leaders in the conduct and expansion of 4-H Club work in Idaho. Specifically, county level leaders were referred to as Service leaders and Program leaders, each of which would assume certain responsibilities normally considered as appropriate only for the Extension agent.

Situation

Over the past three years the Idaho 4-H enrollment has held constant at just under 20,000 members. Few low income youth have been enrolled, and little growth can be seen in the number of youth being reached per agent year.

The 4-H leader-member ratio is 1 to 5.6 which indicates strong involvement of leaders at the club level. However, only 146 leaders (4.1 percent) were classified as county level leaders.

There is a vast difference in the amount of time county staffs devote

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to 4-H Club work in Idaho. The difference is reflected in the number of young people reached through the 4-H Club program. Some county Extension agents reach 100-200 members, while others reach 1100-1200 members.

Eight county positions were eliminated in 1969, thus requiring greater work loads for the remaining agents.

Recognition of the changing role of the county Extension agent and other situations facing Idaho agents point up the need for improving county 4-H programming methods if 4-H is to expand. One solution may be greater involvement of volunteer 4-H leaders.

Objectives of this Study

The following four objectives were developed as a basis for determining attitudes held by agents and 4-H leaders toward the county level leadership concept and their perceptions of leader training needs.

1. To determine the attitudes of county Extension staff regarding the use of Service leaders and Program leaders in 4-H.

2. To determine the extent volunteer 4-H Club leaders feel qualified and capable of conducting (1) 4-H leader training, (2) planning with Extension, (3) recruiting members and leaders, and (4) organizing new leaders and 4-H Clubs.

3. To determine the volunteer 4-H Club leader's interest in devoting time and effort to (1) 4-H leader training, (2) planning with Extension, (3) recruiting members and leaders, and (4) organizing new leaders and 4-H Clubs.

4. To determine the kinds of training and assistance needed as perceived by leaders and agents for those assuming the role of Service leader and Program leader.

Scope and Procedure

Two groups of respondents were used in this study--county Extension agents

and 4-H Club leaders.

The survey instrument used was a mailed questionnaire. Questionnaires were mailed to all county Extension agents (101) and to all 4-H leaders (617) in seven randomly selected counties--Bonneville, Boundary, Butte, Clearwater, Gem, Kootenai, and Lincoln. Extension agents returned 88 questionnaires (87 percent), and all were used in the study. Four-H leaders returned 325 questionnaires (52.6 percent). Thirty two leader questionnaires were incomplete and were not used.

The questionnaires used were different for agents and leaders with the exception of one section which asked respondents to indicate the amount of training a county level leader would need in twelve specific training areas.

The data were punched on IBM cards and programmed for computer analysis. Techniques used in the analysis of data included percentage distribution, rank, mean scores, coefficient of correlation, and coefficient of rank correlation.

Conclusions

From the data collected, the writer concluded that Idaho Extension agents and Idaho 4-H leaders participating in this study had positive attitudes toward the county level leadership concept. A majority of the respondents agreed that volunteer 4-H leaders could assist Extension by assuming some of the organizational work currently being done by agents.

More specifically the conclusions were as follows:

1. More men agents felt that volunteer leaders could satisfactorily recruit and train other leaders and promote 4-H; and more women agents believed leaders could organize 4-H Clubs satisfactorily.

2. Agents with more than 15 years experience held the strongest belief that Service leaders could assist Extension in recruiting and training leaders, organizing 4-H Clubs, and promoting 4-H. Those with less than one year's expe-

rience were the least inclined.

3. Male agents held a stronger belief than female agents that Service leaders could free the agent of routine organizational work.

4. Agents with between one and five years and above 15 years of service were most agreeable that Service leaders could free the agent of organizational work.

5. Male agents most strongly believed that Program leaders could provide subject matter for other leaders. Female agents were of a stronger opinion that Program leaders could assist with county, district, or area programs.

6. Agents with more years of service (above 6 years) believed Program leaders could provide subject matter, and all agents believed they could assist with county, district, and area programs.

7. Female agents and agents with between 6-10 years of service held stronger beliefs that Program leader assistance could free the agent of organizational work.

8. Most agents were of the opinion that the use of county level leaders would allow them to reach more youth and would provide valuable assistance in developing county 4-H programs.

9. Eighty-two percent of the agents believed that they had insufficient time to provide all necessary training needed by leaders each year. This recognition implies that agents want to provide more training but are unable to because of limited time.

10. Only 40 percent of the agents believed qualified adults were available who would prefer county level leadership to club leadership. Leader data in this study indicated people are available and willing; therefore, it appears that many agents have not investigated leadership possibilities in this light.

Volunteer leaders' responses to the two basic questions from which the

writer sought to determine their feelings of qualification and interest in training leaders, planning with Extension, recruiting members and leaders, and organizing 4-H Clubs in their area or communities, showed that:

11. Forty-seven percent of the 4-H leaders felt qualified and 39 percent were interested in training other leaders.

12. The leaders most interested and qualified in training other leaders were between 15-24 and 45-54 years of age, were college graduates or above, had been leaders for 5 years or more, and were equally divided between urban and rural residents.

13. Fifty-six percent of the 4-H leaders believed themselves qualified and 66 percent were interested in planning 4-H programs with Extension.

14. Respondents indicating the highest percentage of qualifications for planning with Extension were 35-54 years of age, while those who felt the most interest were 15-24; they had more than 12 years of education, had led 4-H Clubs more than 5 years, and were more likely to live in rural areas.

15. Qualification and interest of leaders for recruiting members and leaders included 66 percent and 56 percent of the leaders, respectively.

16. Leaders expressing the high interest and qualification for recruiting were between 15 and 30 years of age, had 10 or more years of education, and were more likely to live in rural areas.

17. Sixty-six percent of the leaders felt qualified in organizing 4-H Clubs, and 57 percent were interested. These leaders were mostly between 15 and 30 years of age, had more than 10 years of education, had led 4-H Clubs more than 5 years, and a slightly greater percentage lived in the rural areas.

18. Extension agents and volunteer 4-H leaders differed somewhat in their perceptions regarding training needs of volunteer leaders who might assume the role of county Service leader or county Program leader. In the ranking of

the 12 proposed training areas there was a slight negative agreement between agents and leaders. Table I shows the rank order of leader training needs as perceived by leaders and agents.

TABLE I

RANK ORDER OF 4-H LEADERS' TRAINING NEEDS AS PERCEIVED BY AGENTS AND LEADERS, IDAHO STUDY, 1970

Training areas	Leader rank[a]	Agent rank[a]
How to teach adults	1	4
Contests and awards	2	11
Leadership techniques	3	1.5
Obtaining and maintaining parent cooperation.	4	8
Project subject-matter	5	5.5
Recruiting leaders and members	6	9
Planning and organizing a 4 H Club and program . . .	7	10
Local activities and events	8	12
How to plan and work with project and activity leaders	9	5.5
Objectives and philosophy of 4-H Club work	10	3
Understanding developmental needs of boys and girls .	11	7
How to teach youth	12	1.5

[a]Rank 1 indicates greatest need.

According to the means of the mean weighted scores for each category indications were that:

19. Agents with 11 or more years of service believed leaders needed "some" to "much" training for each of the training areas.

20. Four-H agents recognized greater need for training of leaders than Home agents or Agricultural agents.

Four-H leader feelings of need for training differed according to age, education level, and years of 4-H leadership. Conclusions were that:

21. All leaders felt they "needed some" training, but leaders between 30-39 and 45-49 years of age indicated the greatest need.

22. Leaders with 7-9 years of education felt they "needed much" training, while those with 10 years of education and college graduates "needed some", and postgraduates "needed none," but approached needing some.

23. Leaders with little experience felt they needed much training while those with above 15-19 years of experience needed much less.

Implications

On the basis of this study the writer believes there is not only a need for county level leaders in the Idaho 4-H program but there is enough interest among leaders and agents to insure the success of such a program. The writer suggests the following inplications for the Idaho 4-H Club program:

1. The state 4-H staff could promote the county level leadership concept throughout the Idaho 4-H program.

2. Training could be provided by the state 4-H staff for all levels of Extension. The purpose of this training would be to: (a) develop an understanding of the county level leadership concept, (b) illustrate the essential nature of this approach to the operation and expansion of the 4-H program in Idaho, and (c) assist agents in selecting, training, and planning with county level leaders.

3. Training programs could be provided by county staffs for interested leaders concerning the broad objectives of the program as well as: (a) how to train other adults, (b) leadership techniques, (c) project subject matter,

(d) recruiting members and leaders, and (e) planning and organizing 4-H Club programs.

4. The state 4-H staff could develop training materials for agents and guidelines for county level leaders to assist in their training.

5. Surveys might be conducted in all counties to determine the interest among former 4-H leaders and other qualified local citizens for assuming county leader roles.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study has revealed areas which are not fully clear or where information is lacking. Such areas perhaps should be investigated. Suggestions for investigation are as follows:

1. This study surveyed only volunteers in the 4-H program. Many qualified people within a community may not be affiliated with a youth organization but may be interested in county level leadership. A survey should be made with this clientele.

2. Four-H leaders work with the 4-H program for varied reasons. To know more about the reasons volunteers devote their time to 4-H might provide better understanding of some of the type of people who would most likely accept county level leadership.

3. Through further study perhaps more could be learned about leaders' feelings regarding their lack of qualifications and interest in training other leaders.

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